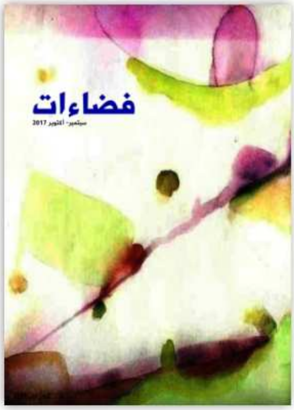
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CONTENTS

Gaby Semaan*

Arab Americans: Stereotypes, Conflict, History, and Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the scholarly research about the Arab diaspora in the United States. While research about Arab Americans can be traced back to 1923, scholars increased their attention to this minority during the last half of the past century with a steady flow to the present. The research can be grouped into four main categories: the first widely studied topic is their stereotyped image in the Western media. The second topic area concerns the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The third category is the history and cultural identity of Arab Americans, and the fourth section examines some major surveys and other studies that focus on the implications of the 9/11/01 attacks against the United States. While these four categories are not mutually exclusive, they do correspond to the major trends in the research. A final concluding section will identify some of the most recent developments and project some prospects for future study.

2. The Stereotyped Image

Much of the research about Arab Americans has examined the stereotyped image of Arabs in the American and Western media. Shaheen (1983) presented how the American media's ugly and negative stereotypes of Arabs accompany a child from his early years to graduating from college. Through "editorial cartoons, television shows, comic strips, comic books, college and school textbooks, novels, magazines, newspapers and in novelty merchandise" (p. 328), Arabs were dehumanized and presented as the "bad guys".

Focusing on this stereotyped image of Arabs in American media, Suleiman (1988) addressed different aspects of this stereotyping and presented a longitudinal study of American press coverage of the 1956, 1967, and 1973 Arab Israeli conflicts and showed how the negatively stereotyped Arab was used as a weapon in the American media in favor of Israel.

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* Dr. Gaby Semaan is the director of Middle East Studies and the Arabic program coordinator at the University of Toledo, Toledo Ohio. He is also the co-director of the Arabic Summer Intensive Program at California State University San Bernardino. Dr. Semaan is a media and intercultural communication specialist whose research areas include cultural identities of minority groups. Parts of this article were used in the author's dissertation.

Zaharana (1995) examined the portrayal of the Palestinians in Time newsmagazine from 1948 to 1993; this research showed that the Palestinian image went through total transformation from invisibility to high visibility after the signing of the Israeli-PLO Accord in 1993. Hashem (1995) did a content analysis of news articles published in Newsweek and Time magazines between January 1990 and December 1993. Hashem's analysis showed that most of the time Arabs were portrayed as lacking democracy, unity, and modernity in addition to having a heritage of defeat and fundamentalism. However, he found some coverage to reflect certain realities and fewer stereotypes when portraying Arabs.

Mousa (2000) recapitulated a few studies that dealt with the Arab image in the West and outlined a "spill over" of the stereotyped image of Arabs and Muslims from the pre-1948 European press to the American press and media. Kamalipour (2000) mentioned the speed with which American authorities and media accused Arabs and Middle Easterners of responsibility for attacks against American targets. For example, he mentioned the accusation of Arabs in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the crash of a TWA Boeing 747 in 1996, and the 1996 bombing at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Arabs had no connection to any of these events, but the media did not bother to report the lack of connection nor tried to undo the harm they had already done to the image of Arabs in the American citizens' minds.

In addition to the above research of the verbal aspect o print media, Wilkins (1995) did a qualitative and quantitative analysis of photographs published in the New York Times between July 1991 and June 1993. The author concluded that the images of Middle Eastern women during the period under study, constructed these women as passive, distant and impersonal.

Scholars have also studied this stereotyped image in editorial cartoons and comic strips. Lendenman (1983) presented how the political cartoons in The Washington Post, The Washington Star, The Louisville Courier Journal, The Baltimore Sun, The Miami News, The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and The Syracuse Herald-Journal have depicted Arabs in a negative way, even portraying the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as "rodents, cockroaches and other detestable animals" (p. 353). Palmer (1995) produced a comprehensive review of the political cartoons published in the Washington Post during and following the 1956, 1967, and 1973 wars and following the 1988 Palestinian 'Intifada' in addition to the period prior to the first Gulf War. All the political cartoons he studied depicted Arabs negatively.

On the same topic, Stockton (1994) studied Arab images presented in hundreds of cartoons from editorial pages and comic strips. All the cartoons Stockton studied presented a dehumanizing image of Arabs. Before intro-

ducing a sample of such cartoons and the different ways in which Western media and writers participated in creating this false image of Arabs, Stockton drew on the similar traits of archetype stereotyping that was previously employed to create a false image of African American, Jews, and Japanese. Furthermore, he discussed how these images were used to justify maltreatment of these groups. He also mentioned that the negative image of Arabs in the U.S. intensified after the Arab Israeli war in 1967. Similarly, Artz and Pollock (1995) did a rhetorical analysis of editorial cartoons published in the Chicago Sun-Times, the New York Times, Newsweek, the Chicago Tribune, and the Los Angeles Times during the last five months of 1990. They stated that the media successfully employed culturally accepted anti-Arab images to promote the American offensive in the first Persian Gulf War.

The image of Arabs in American entertainment media such as radio, television, and movies was also studied. Nasir (1979) studied the portrayal of Arabs in American movies in the first half of the 20th century. In her study of movies exhibited in the U.S. between 1894 and 1960, Nasir found that an Arab male's most frequent occupation, as portrayed in the sample she studied, was a criminal. Terry (1983) addressed how contemporary American fiction presented Arabs and Muslims as "backward, greedy, lustful, evil, or inhumane" (p. 316). Terry added that this group makes "convenient scapegoats in almost all contemporary fiction that deals with Middle East themes" (p. 316).

Jack Shaheen is probably the best known scholar addressing the Arab stereotyped image in the entertainment industry and movies. In his book, The TV Arabs, Shaheen (1984) summarized his findings after examining about 300 programs and documentary episodes aired during the 1975-1976 and 1983-1984 TV seasons. From cartoons such as Woody Woodpecker, Bugs Bunny and other comedy shows such as Laurel and Hardy, Mork and Mindy, and Happy Days, to detective and police programs, Shaheen found the image of TV Arabs to be that of "baddies, billionaires, bombers, and belly dancers" (p. 4). He stated that all the different shows and episodes he examined perpetuated "four basic myths about Arabs: they are all fabulously wealthy; they are barbaric and uncultured; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery; they revel in acts of terrorism" (p. 4).

Shaheen (2001) reported his study of more than 900 Hollywood movies released between 1896 and 2001. In Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, Shaheen exposed how the entertainment industry manufactured a prejudiced image of Arabs, condensing more than 300 million persons spread across 22 countries into a few dehumanizing portrayals. Out of the 900 films Shaheen analyzed which contain Arab characters or images of Arabs, only 63 did not present Arabs with a negative stereotyped image.

In harmony with Shaheen, Kamalipour (2000) mentioned the negative portrayal of Arabs in radio, television, and movies. Additionally, he named 50 movies that were released between 1974 and 1998 that showed Arabs or Arabic speaking individuals committing attacks against Americans. Quoting from Semati, Kamalipour (2000) said that it is a mistaken belief that, "terrorism is essentially a Middle East problem, and most victims of terrorism are American" (Kamalipour, 2000, p. 67).

The stereotyped image of Arabs in scholarly work and academic textbooks was also studied. Said (1975) in Orientalism and the October war: The shattered myths, presented, in a critical approach, the myths about Arabs in the discourse of Orientalism. He showed how this discourse has compressed, reduced, and stereotyped the image of Arabs. In addition, Said showed how the institutions sustained Orientalism by presenting myths as facts protected by a so-called "scientific" analysis. Ayish (1994) conducted a comprehensive content analysis of published relevant scholarly works from 1954 to 1994. Ayish concluded that all the published and unpublished academic works agree that Western media portrayed the Arab world in a negative way (Ayish, 1994, cited in Hamada, 2002. Al-Qazzaz (1975) also discussed how social science textbooks in elementary school, junior high, or high school, contributed to, carried on, repeated, and perpetuated negative stereotyped images and myths about Arabs. Additionally, Al-Qazzaz (1983) presented an update to his 1975 analysis of how social science textbooks negatively stereotyped Arabs.

Parallel to the images perpetuated in academic schoolbooks is one presented in the Protestant Sunday school textbooks that Abu-Laban (1975) studied. The books she analyzed were "creating, as an educational byproduct, black sheep [Arabs] in the family of God." In these books, "Arabs are the most excluded of the deity's descendants" (p. 166). This negative image was presented even in games. Shaheen (1983) mentioned one example of a teens' game called "Oil Sheik" in which, like in Monopoly, players attempt to acquire real estate and the players are encouraged to gain control over the oil producing nations. Moreover, the game instructs the players to create a more "life like" game by wrapping pillowcases around their heads or if the player is ugly to cover his/her head with the pillowcase. Shaheen quoted from one of the game card instructions that said, "impress Arabs with your patriotism by dating a camel" (p. 330).

Ignorance is often a building block of negative stereotypes. Suleiman (1994) presented the results of a survey of high school teachers of world history in California, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, New York, and Pennsylvania. The author's survey indicated the teachers' ignorance about and prejudice against Arabs and Muslims. In a survey of students' perceptions, Kamali-

pour (2000) described American high school students' perceptions of Arabs and the Middle East as "overwhelmingly negative" (Kamalipour, 2000, p. 58).

Stockton (1994) recognized that the inferiority of the "other" the stereotyped image presents, not only promotes the superiority of the stereotyper and his/her group, but also provides immunity for transgressing against the stereotyped group. In addition, he said that such stereotyping can justify key policy decisions taken by the political power in addition to justifying injustices committed by individuals or nations against the stereotyped "other." In summarizing, Suleiman (1999) addressed the impact of the negative stereotyping of Arabs on Arab Americans, asserting that the Arab American community "has suffered and continues to suffer in many ways" (p. 1) as the negative stereotyped image of Arabs was internalized in the mind of America.

3. The Arab Israeli Conflict and the Palestinian Issue

The Arab Israeli conflict provided a fertile field for research. Many researchers were interested in the U.S. media coverage of the wars that erupted between Israel and different Arab nations.

Terry (1975) conducted a content analysis of three U.S and two European newspapers before, during, and after the 1973 Israeli Arab war. Among her findings, Terry noted that there was a slight increase in neutral coverage of the war in comparison to that of 1967, however, the "editorial coverage of the war and its aftermath tended to favor the Israeli position" (p. 8) but "there were some pro-Arab editorials" (p. 8). In addition, one of her notable findings was the tripling of the number of editorials on oil following the war and the oil embargo.

In harmony with Terry's finding, Suleiman (1975) compared media reports about the Middle East in the 1973 war to those of 1967 and concluded that there was a shift toward a more neutral reporting in 1973. However, he mentioned that criticizing Israel remained a taboo and that "the media themselves …have been a principal agent for propagating myths about the Middle East" (p. 37). Similarly, McClaure (1975) addressed the slight shift towards an American awakening regarding Arabs and their images. Touching on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the oil issue, and the U.S. economic situation in 1974, he asserted the need for the American people to better understand the nature of the Arab Israeli conflict, and he stated his belief that the "American awakening" is a reality despite the "misrepresentations [of Arabs], particularly, within the news media" (p. 239). Along the same line, Samo (1975) presented a case study of the coverage of the ArabIsraeli conflict by the Kalb

brothers. He exposed the reporters' pro-Israeli and anti-Arab bias. Similarly, Farsoun, Farsoun, and Jay (1975) conducted a content analysis of the publications of "self-defined leftist" (p. 54) organizations in the U.S. and concluded that these organizations view the conflict in the Middle East as an outcome of the imperialist penetration to the area and Zionism as a product of capitalism and imperialism.

In 1983, McDavid published a study about the American press coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and stated that it did not accurately show the Israeli aggression. McDavid saw the images the U.S. press presented of the Israelis as humanitarians while covering up the Palestinian and Lebanese civilian casualties. He stated that the Canadian and French media coverage offered more realistic pictures of the invasion and Israeli practices against civilians.

Additionally, Shain (1996) echoed what others said regarding the invisibility of Arab Americans before the 1967 Arab Israeli war, which provided an ideological core and a national political agenda for Arab Americans. Moreover, the author asserts that the Palestinian cause provided a unifying terrain for the differently oriented Arab Americans and so did the other events that took place in the Middle East such as the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. However, Shain considered that the Palestinian Israeli agreements of the 1990s in addition to other political events that took place within the Arab countries, or between Israel and some Arab countries, have pulled the common rug from under these differently oriented groups and created a new challenge for Arab Americans in redefining their identity and agenda.

Banks (2003) mentioned how the political events that took place by the end of the Twentieth Century in the Middle East and the years of unjust American foreign policy toward Arab countries have led to a rising activism by Arab Americans and to more expressions of pride in their cultural heritage. Finally, Ibrahim (2009) did a chronological trace of the research focusing on the American Media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As this collected literature suggests, the Arab Israeli conflict which started in 1948 with what became known as the Palestinian Cause, provided a terrain to unite Arabs on one cause and to revive the national identity of Arab Americans, thus affecting their experience (Friedhelm, 1986; Naff, 1985; Shain, 1996; Suleiman, 1975). Taking into account the recent and current developments in the Arab world including the ongoing "Arab Spring" in addition to the stand-still Palestinian Israeli negotiation, future research may question the extent to which Arab Americans are still concerned about the 'Palestinian Cause' and the other events taking place in the Arab countries.

4. Historical Overview and Cultural Identity

The historical perspective and cultural identity of Arab Americans were interwoven topics for researchers. As early as 1923, about 50 years after the first documented Arab immigrant came to the United States, Hitti (1923) provided the estimated number of Syrian immigrants and their offspring to be about 200,000, most of whom were Christians. Hitti also provided a historical overview of the social, economic, and geographical characteristics of Syria and Syrians, as Arab Americans were referred to at that time. He stated that individuals are more inclined toward a "local mind" than "social one" and lean toward a patriotism that takes the form of love for family, sect, and geography of homeland. He also talked about leadership, education, culture, religion, and language. Then, he addressed the background and causes of the early Syrian immigration to the United States, which, as Hitti reasoned, seem to be a mixture of economic, political, and social factors.

As for their organizations, the author noted that Syrians were almost absent from the political scene, except for one attempt of a Syrian who ran for a senatorial position as a Republican in New York but was defeated. However, Hitti brings out the ignorance of the American public about this group of immigrants and the public's undue bigotry toward them. He asserted, "even at present [in 1923] the colossal ignorance and prejudice, on the part of some, is amazing and constitutes the chief obstacle in the way of better understanding".

Hitti (1923) mentioned that the American mainstream, refusing to accept the contributions of the 'Syrian' into this weaving process, was not ready to accept their assimilation. He added that the host culture disregarded the services these immigrants provided to the country and public especially during the years of World War I. During that war, about 7% of the Syrian community served in the U.S. army. Hitti also focused on the religious status of the immigrant community saying that the majority of the immigrants were Christians who, just as the Muslims and Druze among them, retained their faith.

Elkholy (1966) researched, in 1959, the Muslim communities in Toledo, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan. Although Elkholy's focus was on Arab American Muslims, his participants included Muslims from non-Arab countries such as India and Pakistan among others. The author focused his research on whether Islam was hindering the assimilation of Muslim Arab immigrants into the host culture where the dominant religion is different from that of his participants' religion. Elkholy found that although both the Toledo and Detroit communities shared the same characteristics regarding their origin of immigration and time spent in the host culture, the Toledo community

showed more assimilation and was more religious as well. Elkholy also said that the main factor influencing the assimilation of his participants was their occupation more than anything else. He also mentioned that the third generation of Muslims in Toledo were more religious than those of Detroit who were more nationalistic.

Among the trends that Elkholy (1966) considered as trends of Americanization, was the role of women in the family. The roles women played were not only equal to those of men, but sometimes dominated the family. Moreover, women took a greater role in helping their husbands in the family's business ventures. However, Elkholy's remark about the role of women was not necessarily an indication of Americanization. Within the families in the areas where these immigrants came from, it was customary for women to take charge of the family matters when the husband was away from home, and it was, and still is, customary for them to play a role in economic and public life Naff's (1985) book became a landmark in the history of Arab Americans. In it, through a collection of different primary sources, she traced back the history and early experiences of the pioneer Arab immigrants, particularly from the Levant, or what she calls greater Syria. Naff presented a historical overview of the Arabs' immigration to the U.S., which started in the 19^{th} century. She mentioned that the early immigrants came with the goal to better their economic status and return within two or three years to their country with wealth and prestige, whereas the later immigrants came with the idea of making America their home without cutting off their cultural roots. Naff mentioned how between 1909 and 1920 many Arabs were refused citizenship because they were classified as "yellow" race. Such discrimination forced those immigrants to prove their "Whiteness" to become eligible for naturalization.

Naff (1985) said that settling in the "new world" has altered some of the native habits of the Syrian-Arab American immigrants. Factors that affected this alteration process were the "family's economic status, the number of Syrians in its community, and the strength of its attachment to the cultural heritage" (p. 280). Although families, as Naff said, remained the cornerstone for this group of immigrants, the conservatism of these families was altered and the traditional patriarchal extended family notion disintegrated and gave way to a similar notion but within a smaller unit.

Friedhelm (1985) also addressed the history of the Arab immigrants to the United States, which he traced back to the 1880s. He pointed out that the social and religious organizations in addition to the ethnic press have played a major role in their social integration in the host country. Pursuing the organizational angle, Haddad and Lummis (1987) researched five Islamic centers in the United States. Four of these mosques had an Arab American Muslim

majority and had been founded by the 1930s: Toledo, Ohio; Dearborn, Michigan; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Quincy, Massachusetts; and Rochester, New York. Haddad and Lummis's (1987) study was conducted in what they considered liberal and moderate Muslim communities because they could not have access to the conservative sites.

In addition to interviews, they collected a total of 338 surveys in three of the five sites. They concluded that there is at least a nucleus of an American Islam which, although it adheres to the fundamentals of Islamic beliefs, allows individuals to decide what it means to be a Muslim and American. However, the researchers pointed out that the data they collected indicated "some Muslims are feeling at home and welcome assimilation into American life, while others are genuinely concerned that it [assimilation] will jeopardize the maintenance of Islamic values" (p. 171). Consistent with this trend, Haddad and Lummis reported a transformation in the traditional roles of Imams (the Muslim religious leader or clergy) from that of a leader in prayer to that of a minister who provides counseling, tutoring in the faith, and represents the community to the general public. In addition, their study reported different attitudes and degrees of strictness in adhering to traditional Muslim beliefs. These attitudes varied from one mosque to another and so did the acceptance of the liberty of dress and grooming of women attending religious prayers at these mosques. Among other findings, this study revealed the major role women in the Dearborn area played in establishing mosques as places for worship and for community social activities.

Naff (1994) asserted that it was not until after World War II that Arab Americans began to develop an Arab identity to counter the ignorance about the history of Arabs. Suleiman (1994) asserted that being sick of "the outsiders" image, Arab Americans started to assimilate more into the American way of life during and after World War I when they started joining the army and fighting on behalf of the United States. In addition, following the war and realizing that America was their permanent home, those immigrants started to develop an Arab-American community through being more united and less factionalized. In addition, they started to engage in campaigns to better inform the American citizens and others about their Arab heritage.

According to Suleiman (1994), after World War II, the Arab American communities nearly assimilated fully and almost lost their Arab identity, but this identity loss was reversed because of the Palestinian cause and the post World War II Arab immigration wave of highly educated and politicized individuals and professionals. Those immigrants were looking for a better life for themselves and for their home countries as well. Thus, they started working in the political arena in their newfound home. In addition to this, the identity awakening of the third generation of the early Arab immigrants and

the 1967 Arab Israeli war, Suleiman asserted, contributed to the emergence of an Arab identity rather than just a national one and led to the formation of some Arab American activist organizations.

Haddad (1994) sketched the religious composition and affiliation of the Arab American immigrants. She did not ignore the role of the 1967 war in reawakening the Arab identity among the various religious groups and gaining more power over the national identity (e.g., Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian …). In addition, Haddad provided a view of the different religious sects making up the Arab American community: Christians, Muslims, and Druze. Then, she examined the history of establishing their roots in the United States. She also focused on Islam in the US and the different nature it is taking as Arab American Muslims are assimilating and integrating into the American society. However, Haddad acknowledged that "the Arab American community is changing and will continue to change "in constituency and in its forms of self-identification in the years to come" (p. 84). In addition, she pointed out that the new immigrants with their ideologies and commitments is an additional factor to the U.S. tolerance or intolerance of the aspirations of this community and will have a great impact on how this identity will be shaped.

Shain (1996) presented his opinion about the challenges facing different Arab American groups in the United States. He focused on the rhetoric and actions of some Arab American leftist activists in the United States as well as on that of some Islamic groups. He echoed what others said regarding the invisibility of Arab Americans before the 1967 Arab Israeli war, which provided an ideological core and a national political agenda for Arab Americans. Shain categorized Arab Americans into two groups, the isolationists and the integrationists.

The isolationists tend to resist what he calls a "powerful assimilation vision found in America" (p. 22), whereas the integrationists resist total assimilation into the dominant White culture of the U.S. and call for cultural and political recognition. The integrationists identify themselves as Americans and supporters of American values and of a vision of pluralist democracy. The author concluded that a determining factor of how Arab Americans will face these diasporic challenges will depend on the different political events within the U.S. and in the countries of origin.

Using interviews in the Detroit area, Seikaly (1999) focused on themes that relate to Palestinian community identity. The author found that, on the social dimension, the attachment to cultural ethnicity is a "defining feature of the Palestinian group" (p. 30). On the political dimension, the Palestinian community was divided between those who feel desperation and no hope

based on the history they have had with the political promises and the Palestinian Cause, and others who try through their life to create bridges that connect them to the past.

Whatever the case is, Seikaly stated that the Palestinians' community identity is in crisis due to the political events and conditions in the Middle East. Similarly, Ajrouch (1999) used Muslim-Arab focus groups from the Dearborn area over a period exceeding a year during which she focused on the participants' perceptions of the meaning of being Arab or American and which identity the participants took for themselves.

In her findings, Ajrouch states that religion, Islam in this case, played a major role in the formation of the Arab identity. In addition, she said that although "there is no blatant assertion that ethnicity tends to be a gendered process among Arab Americans" (p. 138), gender still plays a major role in the degree of assimilation to the dominant culture where women bear the weight of maintaining the Arab identity of the family and community.

Additionally, Joseph (1999) argued that the representations of the "non-free" hyphenated Arab (Arab-) through a variety of popular and scholarly discourse served as basis for creating the designation of difference of the Arab from the American. Joseph argued that the conflation of all Arabs as one set and the conflation of those representations with the hyphenated Arab in America served to erase the difference between Arabs themselves in order to create a difference "between the free, white, male American citizen and this constructed Arab" (p. 260). The author added that the tool for creating this difference was through the representations of the religious, political, and social orders in the Arab, Middle Eastern, and Islamic world. Joseph argued that discrimination and hate against Arabs in the U.S. during and after the 1967 ArabIsraeli war created the need for organized hyphenated Arab politicized organizations to defend them. However, the author feared that the representations of this non-free hyphenated Arab through the media, academic scholarship, and political discourse, in contrast with the "free American" have created what might be the emerging "other" after the collapse of the hated communist "other."

Caniker (1999) summarized the social and economic conditions of the Arab community in southeast Chicago. That community was facing significant discrimination and stereotyping. Caniker mentioned that because of the economic changes the city witnessed, there was deterioration in the safety net within the Arab community in that area. The author found that some of the problems facing the Arab community in southeast Chicago were due to the interweave of political, economic and social factors including stereotyping and discrimination against this community.

5. Post 9/11 Implications

After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, a few studies addressed Arab American's life and experiences following the attacks. In October 2001, Zogby presented the results of a poll of Arab Americans conducted between October 8 and 10, 2001. The poll commissioned by the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) had a margin of error of +4.5% and showed that 60% of the 508 surveyed were worried about the "longterm effects of discrimination" (p.2) against them because of the September 11 attacks. In addition, it showed that only 20% of those surveyed said that they had personally experienced discrimination because of their Arab American background, but 45% said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/her Arab American cultural background. However, almost half of the young Arab Americans reported that they had experienced discrimination since September 11.

The poll's result also showed that 69% believe that profiling of Arab Americans had increased since the attacks. However, 54% of those polled, although they disagreed with politicized profiling, reported that they think it is justified. Finally, the poll's result indicated that 84% of those polled said that their ethnic background is important in defining their identity and 88% were proud of their ethnic heritage and 83% considered securing the rights of the Palestinians personally important to them.

In May 2002, Zogby International conducted a second poll for the AAIF. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed were born in the United States; this poll (Arab American Institute, 2002) yielded similar findings to that of 2001 and had a margin of error of + 4.5%. However, the results of this 2002 poll indicated an increase of 10% in those reporting personal experience of discrimination because of their ethnic background after September 11 (30% compared to 20% in the 2001 poll). On the other hand, the percentage of those surveyed who said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/ her Arab American ethnic background was 45% in the 2001 survey and 40% in May 2002. In addition, this survey results showed that perceived discrimination toward Arab American students decreased at schools to 21% from a reported 49% in 2001. However, perceived discrimination remained the same among neighbors and friends (25%).

The percentage of those surveyed who believe that profiling of Arab Americans had increased since the attacks increased by 9% in the 2002 poll from the 69% reported in 2001. In addition, the poll's results indicated that 59% of Arab Americans surveyed reported that their public display of their heritage was not affected by the consequences of September 11, 70% of

those who reported an effect were 18-24 years old and 79% of students reported an effect on their public display of their ethnicity.

The percentage of those surveyed who said that their ethnic pride has not changed after the September 11 attacks remained 73%, 15% reported an increased pride and 8% reported less pride in their ethnic background. However, the percentage of those surveyed who are proud of their ethnic heritage was almost 90% in both 2001 and 2002. In addition, 73% reported having strong emotional ties with their family's countries of origin (42% reported very strong ties and 31% reported somewhat strong emotional ties).

Muneer (2002) addressed the change within the American citizenship display of African Americans and Latinas/os as those belonging to these ethnic groups felt the need to express their Americanism by approving the profiling and sharing in the hate violence. Quoting from an article published in the New York Times in September 23, 2001, Muneer said that African Americans and Latinos/as Americans have given in to racial profiling after having been its victims for years. Muneer (2002) also mentioned how the discrimination, attacks, and hate-crimes forced Arab Americans, Muslims, and South Asian communities to accommodate and strategically adapt to embrace their American identity by displaying and waving flags in order to prove their belonging. He also said that the post September attacks against Arab American and South Asian communities created awareness among individuals belonging to these groups that they cannot debase race by way of class belonging because they all came to realize that no matter what class they belonged to, they were still not White.

Like Muneer, Shryock (2002) noted how the attacks forced Detroit's Arab Americans to exaggerate their American identity. Shryock (2002) said that this was a strategy to avoid the consequences of not belonging. Howell and Shryock (2003) concluded that what once was believed to be true about Arabs of metropolitan Detroit entering the cultural mainstream is "likely to be dismissed today as wishful thinking" adding "the image of Arab Detroit changed within hours of the 9/11 attacks." As evidence, they pointed out that Dearborn, due to its high Arab concentration, was the first U.S. city to have its own office of Homeland Security and that the number of FBI staff in Detroit's office doubled during 2002. They also asserted that "the mass mediated structures of public opinion…have performed well as a conduit for anti-Arab" (p. 451) sentiments.

This change in the attitudes toward and fears from Arab Americans would raise many questions about its effect on their cultural identity formation or expression. Realizing this, Banks (2003) mentioned how the political events that took place by the end of the Twentieth Century in the Middle

East and the years of unjust American foreign policy toward Arab countries have led to a rising activism by Arab Americans and to more expressions of pride in their cultural heritage.

In addition, Witteborn (2004) examined the effect of 9/11 on the "communal identity enactment of 5 Arab women" (p. 83). Witteborn was lucky to have conducted part of her research before the attacks and thus was able to follow up after the attacks with the same participants, five Arab women, and find a change in the labels they used to express their identity after the attacks. In her research, Witteborn found that national identity (such as Egyptian, Lebanese, or Palestinian) was emphasized after 9/11 as a means to raise the public awareness of the diversity within the Arab world and to counteract ascribed monoethnic identities. However, the participants less frequently used the identity labels "Arab" and "Arab American" after 9/11. In addition, she found that her participants' usage of the label "Arab" after 9/11 was extended to meanings of "social relationships within a community organization" (p. 94). She found that instead of using the label "Arab American" more often after the attacks, her participants did not use this "panethnic" identity.

Distinctly from Witteborn's (2004) findings, Haddad (2004) asserted that "Tempered by prevalent hatred and 'othering' many are re-identifying themselves as Arab-American or Muslim – American" (p. 51). Haddad said that there are many questions that Arab immigrants in the United States need to answer regarding what identity they want, an American identity or a hyphenated one, and what impact their religious affiliation plays in forming this identity.

Salaita (2005) emphasized how notions of patriotism after the September 11 attacks have distorted the life of American and Arab American citizens. In addition, Salaita highlighted the intricate interaction between Americans of Arab ancestry and other ethnic groups and the role xenophobia, racism, and stereotyping plays in this regard. Salatia argued that rather than altering American attitudes toward Arab Americans, the September 11 attacks reinforced the positive and negative pre-existing attitudes. The attacks offered racists with a rhetorical justification for their attitudes and offered multiculturalists a rationale to fight exclusionary ideals and promote inclusionary ones.

6. Conclusions and Projections

This paper provides guidance for researchers and scholars with insight into what has been published and studied about the Arab American diaspora. It reflects the whole variety of scholars and disciplines that studied this minority group. This could facilitate future interdisciplinary approaches to studying

Arab Americans. In addition, the bibliographical information and review can be used in future research, as it provides some insight into the evolution of researching Arab Americans and the circumstances surrounding the scholarly interest in this particular group.

Three of the most recent studies indicate the current interest and directions of research: Abu-Absi (2010) edited a book about Arab Americans in Toledo. The book's three sections, heritage, profiles and interviews document the area specific experiences of Arab Americans. In one chapter of the book, Semaan (2010) states that, based on data from his empirical research of the Toledo community, Arab Americans there identify themselves with either their national ethnic labels or their ethnic-American label more than those in Allentown, PA or Dearborn, MI. Awad (2010) studied the impact of acculturation and religious affiliation of Arabs and Middle Eastern Americans on perceived discrimination. She reported that Muslims in her study reported more perceived discrimination than Christians. Semaan (2013) presented a detailed historical perspective on the immigration waves of Arab Americans stating the particulars of the previous three waves and identifying a fourth immigration wave that started after the beginning of the so called "Arab Spring" in 2010.

Moreover, the historical review of literature in this paper showed that many studies presented empirical evidence documenting the stereotyped image of Arabs in the U.S. media. However, the assumptions made in the available published works about the acculturation of Arab Americans were either based on studying the Muslim communities, many times including non-Arab Muslims (e.g. Ajrouch, 1999; Elkholy, 1966; Haddad & Lummis, 1987; Haddad, 2004) or were based on adopting the four types of Berry's (1980) model of acculturation without supporting research (e.g. Haddad, 2004; Shain, 1996; Suleiman, 1994, 1999). Future research addressing the acculturation of Arab Americans should attempt to establish valid and reliable measurements and should draw upon the wealth of research available on other minority groups, particularly African Americans and Latino/Latina studies, benefiting from both the methodology and theory that could inform future research of Arab Americans. In addition, future research should focus on the newest, fourth wave of immigration that started in 2011 following the beginning of the "Arab Spring".

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Zoya G. Proshina*

Russian English: Myth or Reality?

1. Introduction

The global spread of English has naturally led to various conceptualizations of this complex phenomenon used in intra- and intercultural communication, which resulted in a number of schemes and models of English (Kachru, 1985; Kandiah, 1998; McArthur, 1998; Svartvik and Leech, 2006; Prodromou, 2008). Among the proposed models, Kachru's theory of three concentric circles has become most popular and widespread, though it has been criticized time and again (Bruthiaux, 2003; Canagarajah, 2007). According to this theory, Russia includes among the Expanding Circle countries, where English functions as a performance variety mostly in international communication and is learnt as a foreign language at school. This is still true although the linguistic situation, characterizing the range and depth of English in Russia, is irrevocably changing, with English acquiring new functions in the Russian setting, more and more intertwining with the Russian language, for example in mass media, advertising, business, and even politics. Among new functions are creative (for example, see Butenina, ,(2010decorative, metalinguistic and ludic (Rivlina, 2005; 2011) ones. Even in education the use of English in Russia has widened, and modernization and internationalization (as leading principles of current education) are associated with shifting to English-language programs providing for academic mobility as a prerequisite of the Bologna process, a series of European agreements aimed to make the standards of higher educational systems of European countries and quality of qualifications provided by their universities compatible.

While this spread of English is hardly ever questioned, the status of Eng-

* Zoya G. Proshina is Professor of Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia. She has been on the editorial board of a number of Russian and international journals (World Englishes, Asian Englishes, Journal of World Languages, Humanities and Social Studies in the Far East). She served as the first and ex-president of FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association) and was 2011-2012 IAWE (International Association for World Englishes) President. She is a co-author of The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes (2007), English as an International Language in Asia: Implications for Language Education (Springer-Verlag, 2012), Multi-disciplinary Lexicography: Traditions and Challenges of the XXIst Century (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), Dictionary of Terms in Intercultural Communication Study (Flinta-Nauka, 2013). This article is based on the plenary presentation given at the IAICS conference, Vladivostok, FEFU (Far Eastern Federal University), October 2013. The paper is made as a part of the project to be proposed for the Russian Scientific Foundation (RSCF) contest.

lish in Russia is still an issue of hot debate. Two issues have become a subject of controversy: firstly, whether English that is used by Russians can be considered as a variety per se and, secondly, what is the name of this English in the system of other Engishes?

2. What Is English Variety?

When we discuss Englishes in Kachru's three circles framework, no one questions the name for Englishes used as native languages in the Inner Circle. They are usually expressed by an adjectival phrase: Australian English, Canadian English, etc. Normally, there are no hesitations in labeling varieties of the Outer Circle – they are also named by an adjective plus noun: South African English, Indian English. However, scholarly clashes break out because of the varieties of the Expanding Circle. For example, many linguists hesitate to name them by analogy with varieties of the Inner and Outer Circle, preferring to shyly name them English in Russia, or, as a rule, derogatorily, Ruslish / Runglish and the like.

This is due to the fact that English as used in the Expanding Circle is not believed to be a variety in its own right. To discuss this issue, let us take into consideration the existing definitions and criteria of language varieties. The Concise Oxford Linguistics Dictionary defines variety as "any form of a language seen as systematically distinct from others" (Mathews, 2003, p. .(236 Distinctive linguistic features of Englishes, observed at all levels of the language, are the ground for such a differentiation. They make up a linguistic system and are determined by the transference of the first language of the speakers. English used by Russians fits this definition perfectly as it has its systemically distinctive features (see Proshina, 2008) as compared with other varieties. However, if we compare linguistic features of a number of non-native varieties, we can find out that, as a matter of fact, many of these features are not uniquely distinctive and are common to other varieties, thus revealing a general trend for dynamical development of the language as such. For example, preference for the Past Simple forms instead of the Present Perfect is revealed in American, Irish, and Russian Englishes, and on the contrary, "in resultative and extended-now contexts" (Davydova, 2011, p. 302) the Present Perfect is favored in New Zealand, Indian, Singapore, and German Englishes (Sanctions have been imposed by the UN thirteen years ago.); plural forms of traditionally uncountable nouns, mentally envisioned discretely, (equipments, furnitures, advices) are found in Russian, Indian) Mukherjee, 2010, p. 178; Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 129), Filipino (Bautista & Gonsalez, ,2006p. 135), East African (Schmied, 2006, p. 198), and West African (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982p. 124) Englishes; irregular (non-standard) use of articles is traced in Indian (Gargesh, ,2006p. 104), Malay (Bautista & Gonsalez, 2006, p. 135), Filipino (Bautista & Gonsalez,

2006, p. 135), Singapore (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 136), East African (Schmied, 2006, p. 198), West African (Trudgill & Hannah, 1982, p. 124), and Russian Englishes. The similarity of distinctive features makes us believe that it is not the only relevant criterion for distinguishing varieties of English.

The Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics by H. Bussman (1996) adds a sociolinguistic component to the definition: "a particular coherent form of language in which specific extralinguistic criteria can be used to define it as a variety" (p. 512). I do not think that this is an essential criterion in our case as all world Englishes, no matter which circle they are attributed to, are sociolinguistic phenomena and their functions in a speech community make up the extralinguistic specificity for an idiom to be determined as a variety. This definition should be specified: it is culture and mentality, or cognitive ways to verbalize things and events, which are extralinguistic but inseparable from language, that make a language variety particular.

Russian English meets the definition of a variety given in A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics ,(2004)as it is "a linguistic system used by a certain group of speakers or in certain social contexts." (p. 324). As a matter of fact, all these definitions of variety are so broad that they include three types of variations studied in sociolinguistics: regional / territorial varieties, associated with certain ethnicities (ethnolects) and places (standard and non-standard dialects and local varieties, or topolects), sociolects representing speech differences in users' classes and social groups (genderlects, youth slang, etc), and functional varieties depending upon situation or community of practice and characterized as functional styles or registers, formal and informal styles. World Englishes as varieties, though they can be characterized in all the three aspects of variation, are usually related to and described in the regional aspect. However, their difference from local dialects is in expressing different ethnic cultures, apart from some other features (see Widdowson, 1997.)

Russian linguists have suggested another sociolinguistic classification of varieties into national and regional. National varieties are related to both literary form of the language and dialects used by a nation (Shveitser, 1976), which implies co-existence of a standard literary idiom together with non-standard dialects and diverse sociolects. Understood like that, national varieties are typical of monocentric languages and Inner Circle varieties of a pluricentric language. As soon as the process of endonorm codification is completed in the Outer Circle varieties, they may also be regarded as national varieties. A regional variety is a language functioning originally as a lingua franca in socio-cultural and geographical conditions that differ from the original setting the national variety was used in, and nativized because of the

transference of the vernacular and adaptation to the new culture. A regional variety is based on the culture of the indigenous population and functions to express this culture. According to this definition, regional varieties can be found in the Outer and Expanding Circles. This definition of the regional variety is used in the World Englishes paradigm and is somewhat different from the sociolinguistic term, as described in the passage above (regional /territorial variety); it better reflects language contacts and accounts for the expanding diversity of a language that might be developing as pluricentric. For example, regional varieties of the Russian language are emerging now in Central Asian republics (Vakhtin et al., 2010; Sabitova, 2013) – they reflect indigenous cultures and have certain phonetic and lexical features specific only to these varieties of Russian. Sometimes regional varieties are termed local varieties, while a number of adjacent local varieties are combined into a regional variety. In this sense, Indian English is a regional variety as it covers Hindi, Kashmiri, Punjabi and many other Englishes. Probably, taking into account the multicultural population of Russia, we should also speak about Russian Englishes in the plural as a regional variety comprising many ethnic linguacultures, which was illustrated by the special issue of World Englishes journal whose cover was titled Russian Englishes (in the plural) (Proshina, 2005) Regional and local varieties are new linguistic formations whose criteria were listed by Platt, Weber and Ho (1984, p.2-3) to include

1. use in the educational system;

2. development in an area where a ‘native variety’ of English is not a majority language;

3. use for a range of functions in a particular society;

4. localization and nativization.

Platt at al. (1984) spoke of the Outer Circle varieties only but nowadays all these criteria are also applicable to the Expanding Circle Englishes. Thus Russian English is used not only as a school subject but more and more frequently as a medium of education. It is definitely used in an environment where native speakers of English are few. A range of English functions is steadily increasing in Russia – it is used in mass media, in creative function, in business, politics, etc. – most often resulting in code mixing and switching. And there are no doubts about localization and nativization of English expressing Russian culture (Kabakchi 2009)

Susan Butler (1997, p. 106) proposed more linguistic aspects for a language form to berecognized as a variety:

a standard and recognizable pattern of pronunciation handed down from one generation to

another;

1. particular words and phrases to express key features of culture;

2. association with the history of the language community;

3. a literature written without apology in that variety of English;

4. reference works showing that people in the language community look to themselves, not to an outside authority to decide what is right and wrong in terms of how they speak and write English.

The first criterion refers to the phonetic accent that is evident in many Russians speaking English. Since the accent is based on the accommodation of English sounds to the Russian phonetic system, the accent does not differ from one generation to another unless its speakers have lived for a long time in an English-speaking country and acquired intonation contours and sound clusters of native speakers. And even those speakers whose pronunciation emulates a model of native speakers most typically pronounce Russian culture-bound words, including proper names, the way Russians do, which makes it easy for English-speaking people to guess their origin. Key features of Russian culture are expressed in culture-loaded words many of which have to be borrowed into English. At the turn of the century, translingual Russian English authors started to become known (Olga Grushin, Lara Vapnyar, Anya Ulinich, and others). And though they write as emigrants, away from Russia, their works are a symbiosis of Russian literary traditions with English. In Russia, creative works in English are also found in the lyrics of some song-writers. As for reference works of Russian English, several dictionaries on Russian culture-loaded words have been published (Burak et al., 2002; Kabakchi, 2002; Yuzefovich, 2003). English textbooks for schools are compiled by Russian authors (sometimes in collaboration with British or American text-writers). However, almost none of them is ready to say that they do not rely on the British or American model and that Russians do not need an arbiter in linguistic issues. Butler's (1997) fifth criterion, if taken in full, might be applicable only to the Outer Circle Englishes and even there we will not find unanimous agreement on the endonormativity of their varieties. Russians are still very sensitive to exonormative British or American standards, especially in terms of grammar.

Some scholars (for example, Bruthiaux, 2003; Dröschel, 2011) argue that we can speak of a variety only when it has its own norms and standards. This proves to be a very conservative point of view on the nature of language variety. A more versatile correlation of norms and English varieties is found in Kachru's (1985) well-known classification of varieties into normproviding/ producing (Inner Circle), norm-developing (Outer Circle) and norm-

dependent)Expanding Circle) Englishes. Probably, the only objection to this typology, well popularized by David Crystal (1995, p. 359), is that developing norms are observed in all three circles but they are, no doubt, most evident and most dynamic in the Outer Circle. It is just a matter of time for the Outer Circle usage to be recognized as endonormative, or having their own norms and standards distinctive from the norms of other varieties. As for Expanding Circle Englishes, they have exonorms and the specificity of their norms as compared with those of Inner Circle varieties is that they are much more variable – Russians, speaking English, can rely on British, American, Australian, and other norms, whichever they like most. In fact, this often leads to a mixture of norms (for instance, an American grammatical structure with British lexis) but since adaptability to a speech context nowadays is much more important than consistency (Modiano, 2002 p. 246), this is not relevant for communication, especially now that varieties tend to influence each other due to unprecedented mobility of people.

Given all these considerations, I would like to conclude that language variety is a complex term embracing at least three main types and many more intermediary and overlapping cases where norm is not the most relevant criterion. What is significant about substantiating varieties is their verbalization of specific culture and mindset and, therefore, transference of L1 certain features, which makes them a means to express cultural identity (a primary means in the Inner Circle, and secondary means in the Expanding Circle.(

3.What Is Russian English?

As many other Englishes from the Expanding Circle, Russian English is not always accepted as a variety of English for the reasons mentioned above. If English used by Russians is not a variety, then what is it? Let us discuss the actual points of view.

As a rule, three alternatives are suggested (and what we say about Russian English is

applicable to almost any other Englishes from the Expanding Circle:

1. many Russians believe that they do speak British or American English;

2. what we have in the Expanding Circle is a lingua franca, not a variety;

3. a performance variety is associated with interlanguage, or learner's English.

Regarding the first point of view, the variety in this case is definitely taken for a model used as an exonormative standard towards which learners and teachers are oriented. The concept of model "implies a linguistic ideal which a teacher and a learner keep in mind in imparting instruction or in learning a

language” (Kachru, 1981). It is an ideal input at school but the output is real practice of use, which might be a far cry from the input. I cannot but agree with Barbara Seidlhofer (2011) that “…the English that is taught, it is usually not the English that is learnt, and… it is the English that is learnt that is put to use in international communication” (p. 194). The model of British or American English, especially when taught by Russian teachers, who remain Russian in their culture and mindset however well (being Britishized or Americanized) they speak English, is produced as Russian English by Russian students. Does this mean bad English? By no means, mastery of the language does not depend on prescriptive rules of language models. A competent user of English is a person who can successfully implement a communicative task and be understood by other speakers of this language, no matter whether native or non-native (Prodromou, 2008; Ur, 2009).

The second mentioned association of an Expanding Circle English with a lingua franca restricts the nature of a variety to only one function, for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a functional characteristic of any variety used for communicating between speakers with different mother tongues (Seidlhofer, 2011). Therefore, all varieties can function as a lingua franca in intercultural communication but each variety differs from other varieties in certain distinctive features. When in an intercultural setting, ELF speakers tend to use certain strategies to overcome challenges of miscommunication and non-intelligibility. These strategies might be common or sometimes different for users of various Englishes that are distinguishable not as linguas franca, i.e. functionally, but linguaculturally, i.e. due to their systemic dissimilarities resulting from the first language transfer and due to their cultural differences resulting in cognitive ways to verbalize their mindset.

In regard to the third alternative point of view, we can say that variety is not a learners' language. It is opposed to interlanguage as the social is opposed to the individual, as the dynamic and functional is opposed to the static and fossilized. Variety is a product of an entire speech community, while interlanguage is a certain level of a speaker’s competence at a certain moment of restricted language development. The dependence and link between the terms is natural: as language is made by speech efforts of its users, in the same way language variety is represented as a sum of many interlanguages of individual speakers, but the terms are not of equal standing. Variety is a more generalized phenomenon and, therefore, more multi-dimensional. While a person’s level of English might be represented by a certain static lect of a beginner (basilect), intermediate learner (mesolect) or an advanced / a proficient user)acrolect), a variety is an average or even a sum of all possible lects of a speech continuum. It is social and multidimensional as it embraces the entire cline of basilect, mesolect, and acrolect. Its description is

done from the typical usage of many speakers, most of whom are welleducated. A variety consists of the three lects. They represent a continuum whose acro-, meso, and basilectal zones are singled out according to the formality of the context of situation, degree of speakers' control over the language used in the situation, and the level of language competence. The acrolectal zone of the variety continuum is employed in formal settings; well-educated users of this lect are highly competent in English and have a full command over their speech. The mesolectal zone is characteristic of either informal contexts, or of formal situations when well-educated users, being tired, frustrated, too emotional or for whatever other reason, can sometimes lose full control over their speech and, therefore, make more deviations in their speech and move from the acrolectal zone to the mesolectal one, or mesolectal speech is found in educated users with a somewhat lower level of language competence. The basilectal zone of the variety continuum is typically represented by speech of not well-educated speakers with low language competence, characterized by heavy accent and transference of grammar, lexical, and discourse features of their first language. When we speak of a variety, we imply all three lectal zones, though a description of a variety is usually made in the mesolectal zone. A variety is functional and dynamic because any competent user of English, when necessary, can easily slide from the upper (acrolectal) zone of the continuum to its lower part, switching from acrolect to mesolect and even basilect (if the situation requires that) and then back from basilect to mesolect or acrolect , but the notion of interlanguage does not imply any switch upward – a fossilized level of basilectal English is not appropriate for functioning in formal situations where the acrolectal level of an individual is supposed to be encountered.

Chinese scholars (Ge, 1980 cit. in Xu, 2010; Zhang, 1997) have proposed different terms for the lectal variation of social varieties: China English for the acrolect, a functionally formal lect of the cline; Chinese English for the less formal mesolect, and Chinglish for the hybrid basilect. By analogy, we might speak about Russia (or Russia's) English for the acrolect used by Russians (diplomats, TV presenters, scholars, etc.), Russian English for the mesolect, and Ruslish for the basilect. Each lect is characterized by certain specific language features by which a Russian who speaks English can be recognized and identified as a Russian, no matter whether they speak fluently and idiomatically or with a great number of deviations from the education model. For example, if we listen to an interview given by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, a very well-educated person, highly proficient in English, we can definitely relate his interview speech with the acrolectal zone but many linguistic, as well as cultural features will definitely tell us that he is Russian. When he is interviewed as a top government official, his language is identified as Russia (Russia's) English; when talking with someone during

a break between sessions, his speech might become mesolectal, i.e. characterized as Russian English.

We can also use the term Russian English in a somewhat broader sense, implying not just the mesolect, but an entire continuum with all its three zones. This can be considered a metonymical usage, for mesolectal speech is characteristic of well-educated and less-educated people, is used in formal and informal settings and bears the greatest number of linguistic features typical of the variety at large.

4. Attitudinal Aspect

We can suggest that non-recognition of the term Russian English is due to the attitudinal aspect first and foremost. To find out the attitude of Russians to the English they use and the dynamics of this attitude (if there is any), we conducted three surveys – in 2005, 2009, and 2013. The first and third surveys were conducted by myself, the second one by Irina Ustinova, Associate Professor from Southeast Missouri State University.

The first survey was conducted at several Far Eastern universities and involved about 300 students and instructors. A full description of this survey can be found in (Proshina, 2006). The survey had a number of questions, of which the most relevant for this presentation was 'Which variety of English do you speak?' Answering this question, only 5% of the faculty identified their English as Russian English, though 44% said they used a mixture of British and American English and there was some transference from Russian in the variety they speak. A similar picture was revealed by students. 6% of them recognized their Russian English and %59were aware that their English was mixed but they didn't dare to name it Russian English, which they found stigmatized. Interestingly, the number of students and teachers who identified their English as British or American was different – teachers (31%) proved to be more oriented towards British English as a prototypical variety whose norm they found more prestigious, while a practical younger generation of students were geared towards American English (20% vs. 7% who labeled their English as British) as a variety used more often in the Russian Far East.

The 2009 survey was conducted by Irina Ustinova (2011) in the European part of Russia and involved 140 participants (language instructors, students and professionals). This survey showed a small increase in the number of those who claimed that they communicated interculturally in Russian English (9% as compared with 5-6 % in 2005). 22 % admitted that their speech was a mixture of British, American, and Russian words and constructions. British English was claimed as a model by 59 % of the respondents (though they self-identified their speech rather than the model as British English) and

American English was recognized as the variety used by 43 % of the Russian respondents.

The third survey was conducted in both European and Asian parts of Russia and included over 300 respondents. The majority of the participants (69 %), however, were from the Asian part of Russia. The respondents included professionals, students not majoring in English, students majoring in English, and English instructors. The majority of the respondents were young, in their 20s. Like the second survey, the third one was done online and included the same questions.

One of the questions in both 2009 and 2013 surveys was about the purpose of learning English. The dominant motifs were intercultural communication (22% in 2013 and 82 % in (2009and finding a good job (20 % in 2013 and 60 % in 2009). Three other reasons were targeted at revealing a reverential attitude to native speakers' Englishes and cultures (the reasons for learning English, as were mentioned, were going to Anglophone countries - 14% in 2013 and 50% in 2009; loving the Anglo-Saxon culture - 6 % in 2013 and 43 % in 2009; desiring to become as good as a native speaker – 9% in 2013 and 27 % in 2009). As we see from the statistics, the number of the respondents who shared this attitude decreased essentially in ,2013which means that the critical awareness of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005) has raised and this process is usually accompanied by heightened self-awareness.

This was proved by the responses to the question: 'Which variety of English do you consider yourself to be a speaker of?' Self-identification of the respondents reveals a considerable increase in percentage – 24 % in 2013 as compared with 9 % in 2009 and 5-6% in 2005 who named their variety Russian English. The progress in self-awareness of Russian English is evident. 29 % of the respondents admitted using mixed varieties, which highlights our thesis of increased variability in the norms of the Expanding Circle Englishes.

However, the model variety for teaching and learning is still not Russian English (3% of the respondents) but British (33%), American (18%) or rather a mixture of both (40%). This is quite justified by the exonormative nature of Russian English and proves that the dominant feature of standard variability is typical of the Expanding Circle Englishes. If we compare the responses to the abovementioned question ('Which variety of English do you consider yourself to be a speaker of?') and to the question 'Which variety of English is your goal to speak?', the percentage discrepancy shows that Russian users began to differentiate the notions of a variety as real practice of use and an ideal model of teaching and learning Though in the above discussion we have made a conclusion of raising critical awareness of native-

speakerism, the attitude towards native speakers' English is complicated. The idea that 'English doesn't belong to the native speakers any more, but to anyone who uses it' still causes big disagreement in the Russian community. As compared with 2009, in 2013 the number of those who supported this statement slightly increased (36 % in 2009 and 38 % in 2013), while the number of those who were opposed to it remained the same (31%).

A great many respondents (47 % in 2013 and 50% in 2009) agreed that it is not the perfectly correct speech that is important in intercultural communication. The statement they agreed or strongly agreed with was 'Schools/colleges should teach English not as the native speakers speak it, but for efficient international communication'. Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement made up 37 % in 2013 and 30% in 2009. So the negative attitude towards loosening prescriptivism in education is noticeable. Linguistic perfectionism discourages the idea of legitimacy of deviations, which make up characteristic features of the varieties, and thus hinders recognizing Russian English as a variety. Probably, knowing other Englishes will promote the idea of English diversity and facilitate accepting our own "rights to be linguistic deviants" (Berns, 2005, p. 92).

So the inferences from the survey can be summed up as follows:

• The preferable models for teaching and learning in Russia are British and American Englishes. The reason for that is quite clear: Russian English as a variety of the Expanding Circle is exonormative, i.e. it has no norms of its own but is oriented towards the norms of the Inner Circle.

• As a variety of the Expanding Circle Russian English is characterized by increased variability of standard forms; therefore, a great number of Russians are not embarrassed to claim that they use mixed models of English.

• The progressive dynamics of the positive attitude of Russians to Russian English is evident: % 24in 2013, 9% in 2009 and 5-6% in 2005 named the English they speak as Russian English.

• The assessment of Russian English will improve and is improving with the development of the conception that Russian English is a vehicle for conveying Russian culture.

5. Cultural Basis of the Variety

Today one of the major barriers for accepting Russian English lies in associating it with learners' English, i.e. with interlanguage, rather than understanding it as a complex social variety that serves as a secondary means of cultural identity. Any variety from the Expanding and Outer Circles has transference features of the native language that comes in contact with Eng-

lish. It is only natural for a variety as a social entity. But each speaker of a variety is able to develop their linguistic competence and move from one lect to another adapting their language to the functional needs and the context of communication. At the same time, every speaker of a variety is a carrier of a certain culture that underpins the variety, so their mindset will be verbalized by their own variety, not any other's.

This cultural specifics of varieties is best revealed in the so-called translingual literature (the term by Hansen, 2012), or world literatures in English (Thumboo, 2006), or contact literature)the term by Kachru, 1983). Russian literature in English is represented by emigrant authors, both famous and less known. The great and well-known names are Vladimir Nabokov and Joseph Brodsky. Less known (so far) have been the names of Gary Shteyngart who published three novels in the USA, Lara Vapnyar with her two books of stories and a novel, Anya Ulinich with her novel Petropolis and Ellen Litman with her stories and a novel about Russian immigrants in the USA, Irina Reyn who wrote the novel What Happened to Anna K., Olga Grushin with her two novels, The Dream Life of Sukhanov and The Line, published in Great Britain under the title The Concert Ticket and some others. These are novels about Russia, Russian people, Russian culture. They reflect the Russian mindset and definitely represent different lects of Russian English.

When asked by a journalist whether her literature is Russian or American, Ulinich pointed to the complex symbiosis of its nature: "Context fills in the lack of literal understanding, while those who understand Russian can appreciate a memory of the language. ***For a Russian speaker it's an expressive moment, a way to enter the intimacy of that language while remaining in the exile of the Latin alphabet; for an English speaker, it is perhaps a reminder that underneath the seemingly understandable prose is a parallel one that is totally incomprehensible***." (Stromberg, 2007: URL)

And Olga Grushin, who was the first Soviet student to receive a degree from an American university and who has a double citizenship until now, also emphasizes the Russianness of her English prose: "I did attempt to imbue my English with a Russian feel, since I wanted the novel to convey a very Russian sensibility overall. I often retained Russian cadences in my sentences (hopefully while staying within bounds of English grammar), made stylistic allusions to the Russian classics, and in general tried to portray through my language the way of thinking of the entire generation of Russian intelligentsia of the sixties—a somewhat exalted, earnest way of relating to the world, when lofty words like 'soul,' 'beauty,' and 'truth' were filled with everyday meaning." (Greer, 2006, URL). Probably this is why this literature is so interesting to English-speaking readers of the world.

Indeed, since English has become a glocal language, which is used globally to express local cultures, it is a secondary means to express national identity, which is done through diverse world Englishes, including Russian English. As Larry Smith pointed out, “Although they [our students] will want to know a great deal about other people and other cultures, they should remember that they can only be themselves. English is a means to communicate to the rest of the world their identity, culture, politics, religion, and ‘way of life’ “ (Smith, 1983, p.9). This is true for all Russian communicators.

6. Conclusion

To sum up briefly, Russian English is not a myth. It exists. It is a variety per se, belonging to the exonormative Expanding Circle. As such, it is characterized by following models of the norm-providing Inner Circle Englishes, and the specificity of its norms is their variability.

Exonormative models are ideal input in teaching and learning, in the Russian educational context they are materialized as Russian English spoken by Russian teachers of English. The output of this learning process normally does not coincide with the input. Russian English is manifested at different levels of the language structure.

Russian English is a general socio-linguistic entity characterized by certain linguistic features that are revealed to this or that degree in the speech output of Russians speaking English. As a social phenomenon a variety of English used by Russians is a multidimensional lectal continuum that can roughly be subdivided into three zones: acrolect, mesolect, and basilect. Unlike learner’s interlanguage, the variety is dynamic and functional, which means that an educated user with a high level of language competence can switch from one zone to another depending on the functional load of English they use and the ability to maintain control over their speech. As a variety, English in Russia comprises all three zones - Russia’s English (acrolect), Russian English (mesolect), and Ruslish (basilect) and cannot be associated only with its lowest basilectal zone, which is infrequently regarded as a deficient language.

Russia’s / Russian English’s major function is intercultural lingua franca, as it provides for the communication of people with different mother tongues and from different cultures. What makes Russian English specific, as compared with other varieties, is not only L1 transference but, first and foremost, the Russian culture and Russian mentality that are underpinning Russian English as a variety.

Russian English is not just a local variety used by ethnic Russians. Since Russia is multicultural and multilingual country, Russian English can be re-

garded in a broader sense as a regional variety that serves as a cover term for expressing in English diverse cultures of minority ethnicities living in Russia. The correlation of the two senses of the term Russian English, in the broad and narrow sense, has not been an object of linguacultural research yet and might be an interesting field for new discoveries and findings.

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Alexander Umyarov, Russia

Eliza Griswold

Metamorphosis

The mimosa trees misunderstand
the New Year's heat, and burst
into mustard tufts across the garden—
their premature buds a birth
forced by the earth's unnaturalness.
Poor trees, like nine-year-old girls
who have to negotiate breasts. It's death
pressing up under the most tender flesh.
In this age, most of us feared ours
were tumors, and we were in season.
Long ago, a girl could become a tree.
Daphne's fingers sprouted twigs;
root hairs branched from her toes;
her torqued curls gnarled into limbs.
She thickened, as we do, in self-defense.



Interview with

Arundhathi Subramaniam

Arundhathi Subramaniam, one of India's best-known contemporary women poets, has a most natural prowess and elegance with which she brings verse to life. A poet as well as a cultural curator and critic, she also explores spirituality and relishes the contradictions and complexities around her in her verses.

With four published books of poetry, alongside contributions to various anthologies and journals, this lyric poet is an important presence on the map of Indian poetry in English. Excerpts from an interview:

You have four published books of poetry – the themes ranging from relationships to god, from love to urbanisation. Is there a recurrent theme you keep returning to?

The first book, On Cleaning Bookshelves, contains in germinal form many preoccupations that developed in later books: the city, relationships, gender, home, love, quest. The next book, Where I Live: New and Selected, circled the question of belonging – or unbelonging – as a source of unease, rage and celebration. That intensified into a kind of dark elation in the new poems in Where I Live, where the poems are erotic and existential all at once.

And in the most recent book, When God is a Traveller, the central focus is journeys. Journeys of all kinds – real and mythic, with images of past and present, colliding all the time. There is an encounter with Mrs Salim Shaikh on a Mumbai local train as well as encounters with archetypal figures like Shakuntala and Kartikeya. There is a fascination with personal gods or ishta devtas as well as a deep revulsion at the religiosity of modern-day Varanasi. Basically, while there's a fascination with the sacred, there's a mistrust of dogmatism on both sides of the sacred-secular divide.

So what has stayed the same is a relish of contradiction, the textures of ambivalence. Poetry is a place where a moment can mean many things all at once. That's always drawn me to it. It still does.

I love that you view yourself as a "lyric poet". What attracts you to this form over others?

When I look back, I realise that what excited me about poetry as a child was its capacity to soar and dive, skate and swivel, be terrestrial and aerial all at once. All those are qualities of lyric poetry, aren't they? A lyric poem is a place where language can be unexpected and startling, where language longs to be unstarched, untethered, unbound – free of the staid rhythms of everyday prose; of the tyranny of beginning, middle and end; of past, present and future; itching to defy gravity and yet capable of obeying it with a certain

wonderful inevitability. It’s language at its most heightened, its most alive. It’s that mix of defiance and alignment that makes a lyric poem what it is – a buoyant compound of sound and sense and silence.

Who are some of your biggest influences in your poetry?

My influences are as varied as Wallace Stevens, TS Eliot, Adrienne Rich, Basho, Tukaram, Akka Mahadevi, Sangam poetry, Denise Levertov and Neruda! I admire AK Ramanujan as poet and as translator, and Arun Kolatkar as well. And there are many poets whose work I enjoy, who are too numerous and varied to name from John Burnside to Savithri Rajeevan and Manglesh Dabral!

What is the state of contemporary poetry in India?

Contemporary Anglophone poetry in India seems to be bristling with activity. There are lit fests, poetry competitions, performance poetry sessions, spontaneous addas, and quite a flurry on the internet and in social media, in particular. Something’s definitely in the air. And that’s to be celebrated.

Of course, when a form is suddenly on the upswing, there will be a fair amount of indifferent verse as well. That’s inevitable. There do, however, seem to be several distinct, self-assured and skilled voices that have emerged on the scene and that’s exciting.

On another level, it takes time for even the most assured voices to truly become themselves. For craft alone does not make a poem, and neither does mere inspiration. There’s a particular mix of innocence and experience, of assurance and bewilderment that is integral to a creative process – and that takes a long time to arrive at. Probably a lifetime. It’s part of the much larger journey of growing into yourself.

“Give me a home

that isn’t mine

where I can slip in and out of rooms

without a trace”

Does knowing that your poems are published and out there in the world validate your being a poet or are you content knowing they’re out of your system?

Well, having the first book published in 2001 certainly was an important moment. And later, when certain forms of affirmation came along – responses from certain poets whose work I admire, for instance, or being shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize – they definitely helped. So, there’s no doubt

that a measure of external validation helps. But with poetry, more than any other literary form, where the external validation is low-key and muted, the primary gratification is the process itself.

How much of your poetry do you "receive", especially being the spiritually inclined person that you are?

I was always riveted by poetry. And so I made sure I never strayed too far from it. It was as simple as that. You merely hang around the places that excite you, isn't it? I think most of my learning in all spheres of life has been by following a hunch about where to hang out. And I've learnt best by simply being around, observing, listening, inhaling.

Craft is important to me. Rewriting, reworking, forgetting, retrieving – these are rhythms that matter to me. They are part of the joy of making poetry. I don't see the inspiration and the perspiration as oppositional categories. They go together.

But in more recent years, I do feel there is a change in the way I write. Not what I'm writing about but how I do it. I've relaxed a little more into the process and trust it to lead me. I've realised the process is wiser than I am.

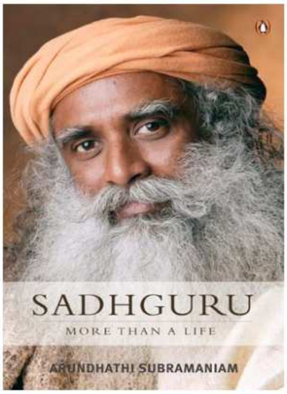
Do you think you were meant to be a poet?

Nothing so grand, certainly! But I'm definitely a good listener – and my understanding of verbal texture and timbre, of image and pause, my ability to detect dishonest notes and clunky constructions comes from years of listening to poems. That probably helps me as a practitioner as well.

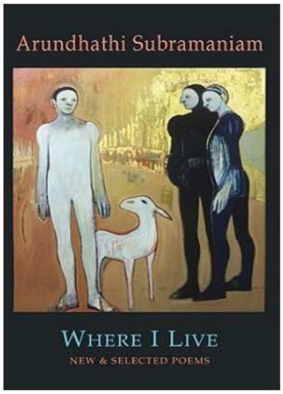
Can you work anywhere or is there a certain space and quietude required to write?

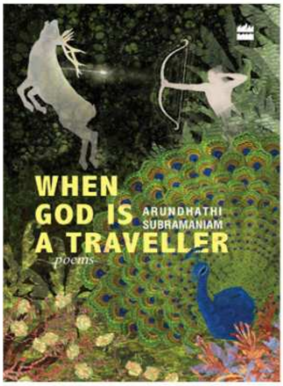
Since I travel a great deal, there isn't a single place anymore. Airport lounges, flights – those are good places to scribble random lines. And my bed is a good place to revisit those lines and work with them. I like the process to seem as undoctored as possible, so that it feels like play rather than work, doodling rather than penance. So, no desks for me – that would be too formal, too deliberate. You need a studied carelessness to write a poem. A kind of lazy guile. And ball point pens and books that allow me to scribble in the margins – that's my thing. Many of my poems have been birthed in the margins!

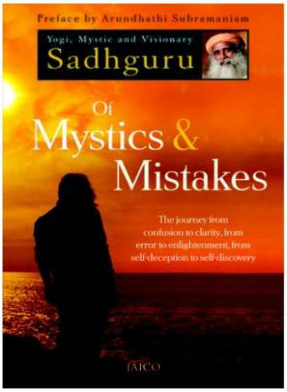
Quiet definitely helps. I need a lot of it anyway, more than most people I know. But on occasion, a bustling café can offer just the right mix of dynamism and stillness. While others are busy leading their lives, you can quietly follow the course of your poem. That's fun!

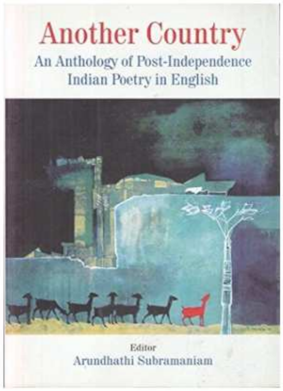

SADHGURU
MORE THAN A LIFE
ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM

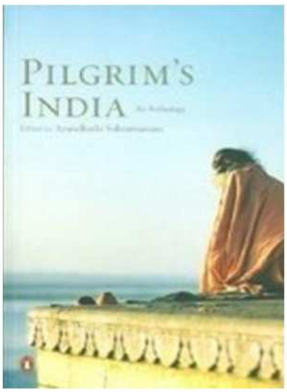

Die Stadt brandete gegen mich
Arundhathi Subramaniam
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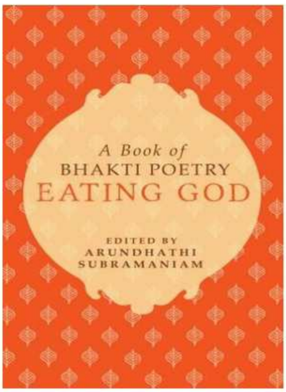

Arundhathi Subramaniam
WHERE I LIVE
NEW & SELECTED POEMS

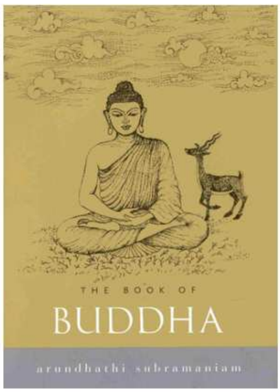

WHEN GOD IS A TRAVELLER
poems
ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM


Preface by Arundhathi Subramaniam
Yogi, Mystic and Visionary
Sadhguru
Of Mystics & Mistakes
The journey from confusion to clarity, from error to enlightenment, from self-deception to self-discovery
JAICO


Another Country
An Anthology of Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English
Editor
Arundhathi Subramaniam


PILGRIM'S INDIA


A Book of
BHAKTI POETRY
EATING GOD
EDITED BY
ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM


THE BOOK OF
BUDDHA
arundhathi subramaniam

Since you do poetry readings often, what is the relationship between your speaking voice and writing voice?

I enjoy reading poems out loud. I am conscious of the poem as a spoken utterance even when I'm writing it – I hear it as I make it. So there is a certain pleasure in sharing it with listeners and allowing it to rebirth itself in sound after its earlier incarnation in ink or print. The pleasure is in vocally following its contours, settling into its pauses, aligning myself with its rhythms, and rediscovering its architecture each time I read it out loud.

What do you see as the role of poet in modern-day society?

What it has always been: to offer the reader the sheer pleasure of living language, reclaimed from the frozen world of cliché – language shivering between sense and no-sense, between meaning and no-meaning, sound and pause. And in the process, to offer insight, consolation, companionship, sanctuary, recognition, epiphany, awareness.

Of course the poet has to be sensitive and alert to the world around her – its history, its politics, its ecology, its culture, you name it. But poetry is born when all that she has absorbed has been so deeply internalised that it is an utterance that arises from her marrow, her bloodstream.

Poetry is verbal magma. That's why it's so explosive, so magical, so incredibly alive, and has to be handled with such care. It's language that's subtle and dangerous all at once.

How does one even begin to judge poetry? Is there some yardsticks that help you define a "good" poem from a not so great one?

For all its subjectivity, it's certainly possible to evolve criteria to assess the effectiveness of a poem. And that's because a poem is a verbal entity. For instance, it's not the emotion that makes a particular love poem successful, but how the emotion is expressed. There are ways of working and refining the "how". That's the craft of poetry, which can be as exacting as the work of a weaver or goldsmith.

Do you have any particular audience in mind when you write, an ideal reader?

Yes, I often do imagine a certain type of reader when I write – my version of the ideal reader. Sometimes this might resemble a friend or fellow poet I know. At other times, this might be a person I wish I knew. Basically, this is my idea of a subtle, attentive, fine-tuned listener, asahrudaya. If I'm certain that a poem has been fashioned with a measure of care and rigour and honesty, I stand by it. If it doesn't find a sympathetic reader, I might simply grow more protective of it!

What is your stand on translating poetry?

Well, I've been editor since 2004 of the India domain of the Poetry International Web – a website largely devoted to making quality translations of contemporary Indian poetry available to a wider readership on the net. I often think of the vast wealth of world poetry – from Homer to Bhasa, Omar Khayyam to Dante, Akhmatova to Rilke – that wouldn't have been available to me without translation. Translation is a necessity – a desperate necessity, a way by which the world becomes a more intimate and vastly richer place.

I've translated contemporary Tamil poems (with Ambai or CS Lakshmi) for an anthology on Chennai, and some contemporary Gujarati poems (with Naushil Mehta). Also some poems by the 18th century Tamil Bhakti poet Abhirami Bhattar for the anthology of Bhakti poetry that I edited, Eating God.

But can a translated work truly do justice to the original poem?

Much may be lost in translation, but much is also gained. And a curiosity about other voices from other contexts is essential if you don't want to inhabit an insular and self-absorbed literary universe. Above all, translation is an exercise that makes you a better listener and often a better poet. It's excellent sadhana, besides being a great deal of fun!

What are you currently working on? Also, what are you reading at present?

I'm working on poems, but it will take a while before a book is ready.

And I'm reading eclectically, as always – Tamil siddha poetry, revisiting Clarice Lispector's The Passion According to GH, poems by George Quasha, a commentary on the Yoga Sutras.

Sheikh Zayed Book Award

Shortlist Contenders Revealed

Dateline Abu Dhabi, March 7, 2018: The Sheikh Zayed Book Award has announced the shortlisted works contending to win the prize across its categories, out of a total of 1,191 nominations received in the Award's 12th Edition 2017/2018.

The announcement follows meetings held by the Award's Scientific Committee to assess the detailed reports of the judges' panels per category, evaluating long-listed works.

The selected works in "Literature" include four narrative works: 'yakfi annana ma'an' (At Least We are Together) by Egyptian writer Ezzat el-Kamhawi, published by Al Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah, Cairo (2017); two titles published by Nofal-Hachette Antoine, Beirut, namely 'ikhtibar al-nadam' (Remorse Test) by Syrian novelist Khalil Sweileh (2017); and 'al -shaytan yoheb ahyanan' (The Devil May Love Sometimes) by Saudi author Zainab Hifni, published in 2017; and "anaqeed al-ratheelah' (Grapes of Vice) by Mauritanian novelist Ahmad Hafid, published by Arab Scientific Publishers Inc., Beirut, 2016.

As for titles under "Children's Literature", the list named 'jada'el khadra'a' (Green Braids) by Syrian author Muhannad Al-Aqous, published by Kalimat, 2017; 'ana salma' (I am Salma) by Syrian author Lina Hawyan Al-Hasan, published by Hakayaa, Beirut, 2017; and 'al-dinoraf' (The Dynoraf) by Emirati author Hessa Almehairi, published by Al Hudhud Publishing and Distribution, UAE, 2017.

In the "Young Author" Category, the Award selected two novels and one scholarly study; 'reih al-sharki' (The winds of sharki) by Moroccan author Mohsine Loukili, published by Dar al-Saqi, Beirut (2017); 'amtar sayfiyyah' (Summer Rains) by Egyptian writer Ahmad Al-Qarmalawi, published by Maktabat al-Dar al-Arabiyah lil-Kitab, Cairo (2017); and 'al-dars al-balaghi al-arabi: bayn al-seemya'iat wa tahleel al-khitab' (Arabic Rhetoric: from Semiotics to discourse

analysis) by Algerian academic Lakhdari Saad, published by Manshourat al-Ikhtilaf, Algeria (2017).

The finalists in “Translation” include three works translated from three different languages; one title translated from English: ‘’al-thawra ‘al-rabi’a: kayf yo’eed ‘al-ghilaf ‘al-ma’lomati tashkeel ‘al-waqe’ ‘al-‘insani’ (The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality) by author Luciano Floridi and translated by Lo’ay Abdul-Majid Al Sayyed from Egypt, published by the National Council for Culture, Arts & Literature, Kuwait, 2017; and one work translated from French: ‘tareekh ‘al-‘oloum wa falsafatuha’ (Histoire et philosophie des sciences) by author Thomas Lepeltier and translated by Dr. Mohammad Ahmad Tijjo from Syria, published by Arabic Magazine, Riyadh, 2017; and one title from German: ‘natharayya ‘astiteeqyya’ (Ästhetische Theorie), by author Theodor W. Adorno and translated by Naji Al ‘Awnali form Tunisia, published by Al-Jamal Publications, Beirut 2017.

As for the shortlist of ‘Literary and Art Criticism’ Category, it includes: ‘fi balaghat al- hajjaj: nahwa balagha hajjajiyyah litahleel al- khitab’ (The Rhetoric of Eloquence), by Moroccan scholar Mohamed Mechbal, published by Kunooz Al Maarifa, Amman (2017); and ‘tatweer al-harf al-arabi wa tahaddiyat al- awlama’ (Developing the Arabic Letter; Challenges of Globalization) by Moroccan academic Abderrazzak Tourabi, published by Institut d’Etudes et de Recherches pour l’Arabisation – Mohammed V University, Rabat (2015), and ‘al-kitaba wa bina’a al-shi’r ‘ind Adonis’ (The Writing & Poetry of Adonis) by Tunisian scholar Omar Hfaiedh, published by Dar al-Saqi, Beirut (2015.(

In the “Arabic Culture in other Languages” category, the list includes four works in Spanish, French, German and English, namely: “La vida de los edificios” in Spanish by Rafael Moneo; “La maîtrise de la concupiscence” in French by Mohammed Hocine Benkheira; “Die Koranische Verzauberung der Welt und ihre Entzauberung in der Geschichte” in German by Angelika Neuwirth; and finally “Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance” in English by Dag Nikolaus Hasse.

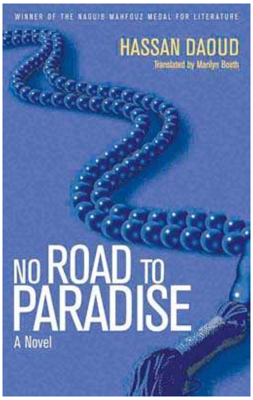
As for the Category of “Publishing and Cultural Technologies”, four publishing houses made it to the shortlist: Dar Al Kitab Al Jadeed; Dar Al-Tanweer; Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, Lebanon; and Les Editions Toubkal from Morocco.

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award decided to withhold the Award from “Development of Nations” category for this Edition.

The Sheikh Zayed Book Award’s list of winners for this session are scheduled for announcement next week, paving the way to the Awards’ Presentation Ceremony to celebrate the winning books on April 30th.

Paul Starkey

Daoud's "No Road to Paradise"



Hassan Daoud is the author of ten novels and three short story collections, and has recently been described as 'one of Lebanon's most important living writers'. No Road to Paradise (translated by Marilyn Booth, Hoopoe Publishing, Cairo, 2016), originally published in Arabic in 2013 as La Tariq ila al-Janna, is a work that can only serve to reinforce that view, having already (in the Arabic original) been awarded the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 2015. Set in rural Lebanon, and told in the first person, the novel explores the predicament of a Shi'ite rural imam who has failed to find fulfilment in either his religious or his family life. Confronted with a diagnosis of apparently terminal cancer, and forced to undergo a life-changing operation that leaves him impotent, he is led to question his religious values as he struggles to reassess his place in the world.

The narrator comes from a family of imams originally of some distinction, at least in the local context: '[his] grandfather Sayyid Murtada's fatwa on how a husband could return to his wife after divorcing her was still known and talked about, as was his ode to the Imam Ali' (p.131). The narrator's father, however, did not write anything, or 'utter anything that became part of a public legacy (p.132); and the narrator himself has inherited neither the piety nor the scholarship of his forebears; he took up his religious calling solely to please his family, and his religious books remain almost entirely unread. The sterility of his sham religious life is mirrored in his family situation: having consented to an arranged marriage, he finds himself bound to a wife whom he does not love, and of the three children he has had with her, two are deaf-mute boys. In the course of the narrative, his long-senile father dies, adding a further element of emotional deprivation to an already bleak existence.

In this seemingly remorseless sterile environment, almost the only obviously positive element is provided by the narrator's brother's widow, with whom the narrator is in love, and it is the progress of their relationship that to a large extent gives the novel coherence, enabling the author to give his narrative at least the semblance of a logical progression. To speak of a 'relationship' is perhaps to suggest too much, however, for though the narrator's

physical impotence does not put an end to his lust, it inevitably ends in frustration ‘That I had lost what I had lost in the operation didn’t lessen my desire for her’, he remarks: ‘No longer having it didn’t stop those images of her body from pursuing me. The physical longings were just as strong as before.’ Their intimate, physical encounter is described in sensuous detail, but a moment comes when she ‘suddenly, quickly became alert to the fact that what we were doing together had ended’ (p.210); declining a cup of coffee, the narrator leaves, pitched in every direction by a ‘messy blend of rapture and dis-ease’ as he drives home.

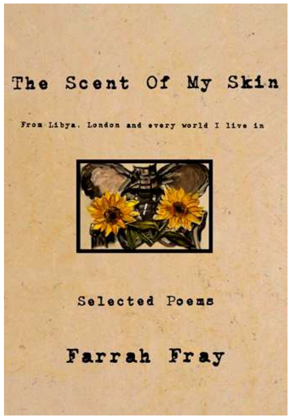
For the most part, this is a narrative that moves forward not so much on the basis of bold decisions or dramatic events as through enigmatic hints, through subtle shifts in the attitudes of the various players toward each other, and through the progress of the narrator’s inner struggles, conducted against the background of his progressive physical deterioration. Suffused with an almost English tone of understatement, essential actions are often reduced to the bare minimum: when the narrator’s father dies, for example, ‘I did not even have to turn his face toward Mecca, the direction of prayer. He had already that for himself, many days ago. That was how he had prepared himself to die, suppressing any wish he might have to give his side and shoulder a rest by turning onto his other side.’ (p160)

Despite the narrative being set in the specific Lebanese village of Shqifiyeh – and despite the obviously Shi’ite intellectual and geographical reference points – the novel probably tells us more about the human spirit, and about man’s emotions, reflections and fear in the face of imminent death, than it does about anything in rural Lebanon, or indeed, the Middle East as a whole. Toward the end of the work, however, a more immediate reality appears to intrude somewhat, as the imam’s mosque is all but taken over by what appear to be a group of Islamic fundamentalists. Although the process is described for the most part in elliptical terms, in line with the general tone and style of the work, the end result – as the narrator hands over his books to the group – seems ominously symbolic of contemporary events.

Although this novel has not met with universal approbation among reviewers, I personally found it one of the most powerful and impressive Arabic works that I have read in a long time, well deserving of the Naguib Mahfouz medal that it has already won. It has found in Marilyn Booth an English translator well worthy of the task, and her seamless translation deserves to be widely read.

Lizzy Vartanian

Fray's "The Scent of my Skin"



Born in London to Libyan parents, Farrah Fray was uprooted from her British home and placed inside a Libyan village as a teenager. Despite her ethnicity, having become acclimatized to London life, her relocation from a busy cosmopolitan city to a rural Middle Eastern environment was a difficult transition. Returning to London after high school, Fray has become attuned to the differences in social and cultural traditions between her two homelands. In The Scent of my Skin, her debut collection of poetry, Fray documents her experience as a female living between the two countries.

Divided into five parts: Foot-traffic herbs, Milk, Coffee, Sugar and Footpaths, Fray's lyrics not only touch on culture and upbringings, but also the things that unite us: most notably love and heartbreak. The text is incredibly sensual, even the title 'The Scent of my Skin' carries references to two of the five senses (scent and touch), as well as mirroring the number of senses in the five sections that the prose is divided into. When Fray writes about lust or anguish, the sentiments she conveys are universal to all women. Her poems are incredibly raw and honest, likening secrets from her lover to "graves" in her body and at other times speculating over the identity of the women that have taken her place in the lives of lovers past.

Poems of note are Girl combat London, where Fray asks her reader to teach young women that "…words are a martial art/that can be used to say no/as well as yes…" and Healing, where Fray acknowledges both the strength and the fragility of women. Within the three-verse lyric Fray talks about supporting a fellow female who is crying, while admitting that sometimes it is she who is weeping and who thinks the world is over, finishing by reassuring us that we can all heal. It is uplifting in a gentle, soothing way.

At the beginning of each of the five sections, its title is defined by noun and verb, demonstrating how such small words can carry so many different meanings. Fray includes references to places throughout, from coffee shops in Libya to the Battersea Park Road . The final part, Footpaths , is all about

travel. Beginning in an airport, Fray takes us through Libya, Tunisia and Britain. This chapter is all about journeys, both those travelled by distance, and the emotional ones. The words are intense, documenting the loss of a father; it is full of love and heartbreak. Fray is not just acquainted with losing her homes, in a constant battle between the UK and Libya, but she also leaves behind family members and friends. This part also touches on the experiences of refugees as she acknowledges the situation faced by millions of refugees leaving the Middle East in search of a better life.

While at times the text may seem heavy, it is also extremely light. There are a series of poems named after the people who have been Fray's partners in crime during different points of her life. We are introduced to Karina before meeting Ayah, who was Fray's best friend at her international school in Libya, and finally we go back south of the river, to Clapham with Marwa.

> "and some words would remind me of you.
> in fact, all words would remind me of you..."
>
> - I couldn't want you anyway
> Farrah Fray

With titles like Comment section, Women and Boys don't like us, Fray writes about topics that unite all women globally. She also gives us a little insight into Libya with inklings of distinctly Middle Eastern references through stories packed with orange blossom, sahlab and a warmer climate. The Scent of My Skin straddles London and Libya to delicately explore the female differences and similarities in their attitudes towards relationships, culture and identity.

The Scent of My Skin: From Libya, London and Every World I Live In by Farrah Fray is published by Palewell Press Migrations and is available to purchase on Amazon.

Sweta Srivastava Vikram*

3 Poems

Dark Forest

There is a fire burning inside me.
At first I try to hide the fact,
but any passerby could look inside me
and tell it was fake calm that I was drinking
at the airport lounge in a wine glass.
But, inside that one glass,
I could become invisible.
Inside that one sip,
I could whisper my fears.

I play tag with your memories.
I wonder if I am different from you—
I worry how I will preserve
the scent of your memories.

I call up New Delhi;
the doctors don't know

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* Sweta Srivastava Vikram (www.swetavikram.com), featured by Asian Fusion as "one of the most influential Asians of our time," is an award-winning writer, three-time Pushcart Prize nominee, Amazon bestselling author of 9 books, novelist, poet, essayist, and columnist who currently lives in New York City with her husband. A graduate of Columbia University, when Sweta is not doing yoga, dancing, cooking, traveling, writing books and posts for other magazines, teaching creative writing, or giving talks on gender equality, she is working as a digital marketing strategist and content marketing specialist.

if you'll make it.
I pick up my ticket and passport,
and look at the sky, ready to bleed,
praying it'll hold off
until I reach you.

Stepping inside the dark forest,
not knowing everything will change after today,
I buckle my seat belt.
Not knowing my heart will change
after you leave.

Monologue

Can I walk inside
your heart
and bring my empty palms
to those leaks in your valves
so you don't drown?

Can I read
you passages from our unwritten lives,
so you are convinced
to fight harder,
and I don't grieve
for you already?

The flight is set for takeoff.
Can you see me coming?

Don’t ask me to keep the faith,
because the sky looks empty.

I want nothing more
than for you to wait for me.

The Lost Ones

We were raised to say only words
that were nice.
I challenged your behavior, Ma—
wondered why you kept so many secrets.
I’ve taken us to places
where no family has gone before.
I need this silence to end.
I want to know
why you accepted mean words
from those lost at the pathway of life.

You might have a new place
to sleep and eat
and to turn out
the noise of these questions.
Think of us—the lost ones left behind.